IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend Claim 1 as shown below. The claims, as pending in the subject application, now read as follows:

1. (Currently amended) An image forming system including a server and client computers and at least one image forming device which communicates with said server, and devices of which one or a plurality can be connected to the server, said system comprising:

input means for inputting to the server a job to be printed by an image forming device;

rendering means for rendering the job input by said input means into an image;

output means for outputting an image rendered by said rendering means to an image forming device specified by the job;

setting means for setting the specified image forming device as an output destination at the server;

output destination information holding means for holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by said setting means;

displaying means for setting dialog on a display unit which shows information of said image forming devices;

recognizing means for recognizing a presence of devices connected to the server, and a number thereof connected in response to obtaining instruction to add new image forming devices as output destinations, wherein said instruction is input via said display unit; and

determination means for determining a number N of the devices connected to the server that have been recognized by said recognizing means, and a number M of image forming

devices already set as output destinations by said holding means and said new image forming device, when the specified image forming device is set as an output destination by said setting means,

wherein, in an event that said determination means judges M to be less than N, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is permitted, and the number of image forming devices set as output destinations held by said holding means is updated, and, in an event that said determination means judges N and M to be equal, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted, and

wherein said output means outputs the image rendered by the rendering means via the specified image forming device when setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is permitted, and said output means does not output the image rendered by the rendering means via the specified image forming device when setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted.

2. (Canceled)

3. (Previously presented) An image forming system including a server and client computers connected to a network, one or a plurality of image forming devices connected to either the network or the server, and devices of which one or a plurality can be connected to the server and which can be recognized by the server, said system comprising:

input means for inputting to said the server a job to be printed by an image forming device;

rendering means for rendering the job inputted by said input means into an image;

output means for outputting an image rendered by said rendering means to an image forming device specified by the job;

setting means for setting the specified image forming device as an output destination at the server;

output destination information holding means for holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by said setting means; and

recognizing means for recognizing a presence of devices connected to the server and a number thereof connected,

wherein the server periodically recognizes the number of devices connected to the server using said recognizing means, and determines a number n of recognized devices with a number m of image forming devices set as output destinations held in said output destination information holding means, and, in an event that n is judged to be less than m, a number of image forming devices for distributing and outputting jobs is restricted to at most the number n of recognized devices by recognizing means, or no jobs are output.

4. (Canceled)

5. (Previously presented) An image processing device for outputting image data to a plurality of image forming devices, said image processing device comprising:

input means for inputting an image forming job, wherein one of the plurality of image forming devices is specified as an output destination;

image processing means for generating image data for the specified image forming device based on the image forming job;

image output means for outputting image data generated by said image processing means to the specified image forming device;

connecting means for connecting to one or a plurality of devices; and

control means for restricting a number of image forming devices capable of receiving image data outputted from said image output means, of the plurality of image forming devices, based on a number of devices connected to said connecting means,

wherein, in an event that the number of devices connected to said connecting means is less than a number of the plurality of image forming devices, said control means selects a number of image forming devices corresponding to a difference in these numbers, and forbids image data outputted from said image output means from transmitting to the selected image forming devices.

6. (Canceled)

7. (Original) An image processing device according to Claim 5, wherein in an event that sending image data from said image output means to an image forming device is forbidden, said control means notifies an originator of the image forming job to that effect.

8. (Original) An image processing device according to Claim 5, wherein the image forming job includes PDL data inputted from computer devices via networks.

9. (Original) An image processing device according to Claim 5, wherein the image forming job includes image data read by scanners.

10. (Original) An image processing device according to Claim 5, further comprising obtaining means for obtaining data indicating a type of image forming device set for each device connected to said connecting means, wherein said control means counts a number of devices per type of image forming device, and restricts by type of image forming device a number of image forming devices capable of producing an output for said image output means.

11. (Original) An image processing device according to Claim 10, wherein, in an event that the specified image forming device is a predetermined type, said control means does not restrict the number of image forming devices capable of producing an output for said image output means.

12. (Previously presented) An image processing method for outputting image data to a plurality of image forming devices, said method comprising:

an input step of inputting an image forming job, wherein one of the plurality of image forming devices is specified as an output destination;

an image processing step of generating image data corresponding to the specified image forming device based on the image forming job;

an image output step of outputting image data generated in said image processing step to the specified image forming device;

an identifying step of identifying one or a plurality of devices connected to a predetermined interface; and

a control step of restricting a number of image forming devices capable of outputting in said image output step, of the plurality of image forming devices, based on a number of devices connected,

wherein, in an event that the number of devices connected is less than a number of said plurality of image forming devices, said control step selects a number of image forming devices corresponding to a difference in those numbers from the plurality of image forming devices, and forbids image data outputted in said image output step from transmitting to the selected image forming devices.

13. (Canceled)

14. (Original) An image processing method according to Claim 12, wherein in an event that sending image data outputted in said image output step to the specified image forming device is forbidden, said control step notifies an originator of the image forming job to that effect.

15. (Original) An image processing method according to Claim 12, wherein the image forming job includes PDL data inputted from computer devices via networks.

16. (Original) An image processing method according to Claim 12, wherein the image forming job includes image data read by scanners.

17. (Original) An image processing method according to Claim 12, further comprising an obtaining step for obtaining data indicating a type of image forming device set for each connected device identified in said identifying step, wherein said control step counts a number of devices per type of image forming device, and restricts by type of image forming device a number of image forming devices capable of producing an output in said image output step.

18. (Original) An image processing method according to Claim 17, wherein, in an event that the specified image forming device is a predetermined type, said control step does not restrict the number of image forming devices capable of producing an output in said image output step.

19. (Previously presented) A computer program stored on a computer-readable medium and executed by a computer of an image processing device for implementing a method of outputting image data to a plurality of image forming devices, said computer program comprising:

code of an input step of inputting an image forming job, wherein one of the plurality of image forming devices is specified as an output destination;

code of an image processing step of generating image data corresponding to the specified image forming device based on the image forming job;

code of an image output step of outputting image data generated in the image processing step to the specified image forming device;

code of an identifying step of identifying one or a plurality of devices connected to a predetermined interface; and

code of a control step for restricting a number of image forming devices capable of receiving image data outputted in said image output step, of the plurality of image forming devices, based on a number of devices connected,

wherein, in an event that the number of devices connected is less than a number of said plurality of image forming devices, said control step selects a number of image forming devices corresponding to a difference in those numbers from the plurality of image forming devices, and forbids image data outputted in said image output step from transmitting to the selected image forming devices.

20. (Canceled)

21. (Previously presented) A server apparatus which communicates with image forming devices, said server comprising:

setting means for setting a specified image forming device as an output destination at the server;

output destination information holding means for holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by said setting means;

recognizing means for recognizing a number of licenses in response to an obtaining instruction to add a new image forming device as an output destination; and

determination means for determining a number "N" of image forming devices connected to the server using the number of licenses that have been recognized by said

recognizing means, and a number "M" of image forming devices already set as output destinations by said holding means and said new image forming device, when the specified image forming device is set as an output destination by said setting means,

wherein in an event that said determination means judges M to be less than N, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is permitted and the number of image forming devices set as output destinations held by said holding means is adjusted, and in an event that said determination means judges N and M to be equal, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted.

22. (Previously presented) A server apparatus according to Claim 21, wherein the number of licenses is determined by the number of licensing devices connected to the server apparatus.

23. (Previously presented) A server apparatus which communicates with one or a plurality of image forming devices and devices, said server apparatus comprising:

setting means for setting a specified image forming device as an output destination at the server;

output destination information holding means for holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by said setting means; and

recognizing means for recognizing a number of licenses,

wherein the server periodically determines a number "N" of recognized devices connected to the server using said recognizing means, and compares the number of recognized devices with a number "M" of image devices set as output destinations held in said output

destination information holding means, and, in an event that N is judged to be less than M, a number of image forming devices for distributing and outputting jobs is restricted to at most the number of recognized devices, or no jobs are output.

24. (Previously presented) A server apparatus according to Claim 23, wherein the number of licenses is determined by the number of licensing devices connected to the server apparatus.

25. (Previously presented) A method of operating a server apparatus which communicates with image forming devices, said method comprising:

a setting step of setting a specified image forming device as an output destination at the server;

an output destination information holding step of holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by said setting means;

a recognizing step of recognizing a number of licenses in response to an obtaining instruction to add a new image forming device as an output destination; and

a determination step of determining a number "N" of image forming devices connected to the server using the number of licenses that have been recognized by said recognizing step, and a number "M" of image forming devices already set as output destinations by said holding step and said new image forming device, when the specified image forming device is set as an output destination by said setting step,

wherein in an event that said determination step judges M to be less than N, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is permitted and the

number of image forming devices set as output destinations held by said holding step is adjusted, and in an event that said determination means judges N and M to be equal, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted.

26. (Previously presented) A computer-readable medium storing a computer program for operating a server apparatus which communicates with one or a plurality of image forming devices, said computer program comprising:

code for a setting step of setting a specified image forming device as an output destination at the server;

code for an output destination information holding step of holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by said setting means;

code for a recognizing step of recognizing a number of licenses in response to an obtaining instruction to add a new image forming device as an output destination; and

code for a determination step of determining a number "N" of image forming devices connected to the server using the number of licenses that have been recognized by said recognizing step, and a number "M" of image forming devices already set as output destinations by said holding step and said new image forming device, when the specified image forming device is set as an output destination by said setting step,

wherein in an event that said determination step judges M to be less than N, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is permitted and the number of image forming devices set as output destinations held by said holding step is adjusted, and in an event that said determination means judges N and M to be equal, setting of the specified image forming device as the output destination is not permitted.

27. (Previously presented) A method of operating a server apparatus which communicates with one or a plurality of image forming devices, said method comprising:

a setting step of setting a specified image forming device as an output destination at the server;

an output destination information holding step of holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by said setting means; and

a recognizing step of recognizing a number of licenses,

wherein the server periodically determines a number "N" of recognized devices connected to the server using said recognizing step, and compares the number of recognized devices with a number "M" of image devices set as output destinations held in said output destination information holding step, and, in an event that N is judged to be less than M, a number of image forming devices for distributing and outputting jobs is restricted to at most the number of recognized devices, or no jobs are output.

28. (Previously presented) A computer-readable medium storing a computer program for operating a server apparatus which communicates with one or a plurality of image forming devices, said program comprising:

code for a setting step of setting a specified image forming device as an output destination at the server;

code for an output destination information holding step of holding a number of image forming devices set as output destinations by said setting means; and

code for a recognizing step of recognizing a number of licenses,

wherein the server periodically determines a number "N" of recognized devices connected to the server using said recognizing step, and compares the number of recognized devices with a number "M" of image devices set as output destinations held in said output destination information holding step, and, in an event that N is judged to be less than M, a number of image forming devices for distributing and outputting jobs is restricted to at most the number of recognized devices, or no jobs are output.